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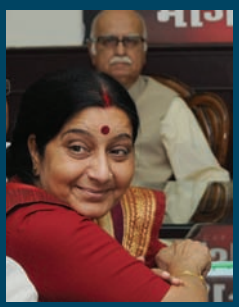

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INSIDE THE GOVERNMENT

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INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE ~~SERVICE~~ SERVANT

THE TRAPPED BUREAUCRACY

From the mouths of the nation's top bureaucrats emerges the horrific tale of how vested interests have stymied implementation of the public agenda

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IS ANYBODY LISTENING?

Bureaucrats are the fall guys for everything that's wrong with India. But are the babus as uncaring and unmindful of the nation's problems as they are made out to be or are they the victims of a political class that has prevented them from playing their true role as administrative guardians? Dozens of top-serving officials have spoken to gfiles *over the last three years. Editor* **Anil Tyagi** *analyses the causes of inertia and reproduces many of the voices that have spoken with candour.*

"We have to make sure that the rural sector develops at the same pace as sectors like services, manufacturing and the urban sector. There has to be balance" — KM Chandrasekhar, Cabinet Secretary (*gfiles*, April 2009)

"Both the Central and state governments have not built the capacity of panchayats. Unless you provide them reasonable buildings, essential manpower, essential infrastructure, how will they really function?" — ANP Sinha, Secretary, Panchayati Raj, (*gfiles,* September 2009)

"I saw 16 Secretaries of Tourism in UP in my five-and-a-half-year tenure in the Ministry of Tourism. No Secretary stayed more than three to four months. There is no political and administrative commitment for growth of tourism in UP" — Amitabh Kant, Additional Secretary; CEO, Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor Development Corporation (*gfiles,* October 2009)

THESE are only some of the on-the-record voices of India's seniormost bureaucrats who bear the onerous responsibility of running a nation of 1.2 billion people – one-fifth of all humankind. Are they angry? Are they frustrated? For sure, they are concerned. Disclosing their minds in interviews to *gfiles* over more than two years, their pain is revealed.

These Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers with grassroots, hands-on experience know the nation's problems. They know what needs to be done, which schemes need emergency implementation. But now, even as they sit at the top of their hierarchies, they are a sick and worried lot because, instead of becoming a part of the solution, they have become a part of the problem.

In describing their situation, the epithets fly fast and furious: they are stymied, often paralysed into inaction, trapped, ensnared. So who is preventing them from doing what must be done?

The tragic irony of modern-day Indian governance is that these guardians of administration – about 10,000 in all –

PHOTOS: SHARAD SAXENA

'The workload is too much. The administrator-population ratio is 1:60, lowest in Asia. Every day you are announcing new schemes and the machinery is the same. You are opening the door for corruption'

Yogendra Narain,
ex-Secretary General, Rajya Sabha

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From the Editor-in-Chief

MORE often than not, deadline-weary editors rushing from one issue of a magazine to the next fail to recognize the overall impact of what they have produced over a period of time. At the time of putting out a current edition, we appreciate the merits of individual stories or the force of special packages and features.

It is only when we look back during editorial exercises to produce annual supplements or retrospectives that we become conscious that the collective content is really an orderly stream of thought and revelation. What we habitually believed to be hit-or-miss storytelling contained much more intellectual calibration than we supposed.

It is this process that has given birth to our December cover story. The cover line of a "trapped bureaucracy" is not just a hypothetical adumbration that we are elucidating through actual reporting but rather the true voice of reform and rebellion that has spoken through *gfiles* over the last three years. It is not an idea or someone's point of view that we are trying to prove, but rather the proof that the idea itself is sound.

This discovery occurred as we were leafing through scores of interviews with the country's top serving and former bureaucrats about the state of the nation. We, too, have often been prejudiced by the notion that babus will always be babus and that citizens are doomed to live in a Kafkaesque void of bureaucracy. But for everything that is damnable about the bureaucracy, one thing stood out in sharp relief. In the Indian context, our post-Independence bureaucrats were not Czarist blood suckers or Stalinist apparatchiks. Our administrators started out with the spirit of guardianship – of taking the benefits of India's newly found political and economic freedom to every citizen.

That this belief prevailed and struck a resonant chord in most of our career services is the dominant theme in every one of those interviews that we have reproduced. And these same officials have also candidly recorded the fall from grace of the bureaucracy, the reasons, and the technical and administrative changes that they know must be implemented to save the system and move the nation forward.

But they are fettered by a venal and hideously corrupt political class and vested interests that look upon the Indian state as a private milch cow. Some are able to buck the system, some turn into whistleblowers and suffer harsh political retribution, while most feel trapped.

With the speedy pace of globalization, the creation of special economic zones, and the emergence of India as an attractive global market there is a compelling need for an impartial bureaucracy that must ensure that nobody is allowed to exploit the vulnerability of this market. The stifling of honest bureaucrats by vested interests renders them powerless to protect India's national interests. Nor will they be able to play the crucial role in ensuring a level playing field in all areas of endeavour as the pace of globalization accelerates.

INDERJIT BADHWAR

LETTERS: Though we served in different arms, Gen Noble Thamburaj and I were together from day one at NDA. We had adjacent cabins for three of the six terms there. I have seen his work ethos and dedication to duty. He reached these heights very deservedly and we, his course mates, are proud of his achievements. His wife, Anita, has been a great support for him. He has described his career journey lucidly. I wish him and Anita a happy innings in retirement.

Brig (Retd) Prabir Goswami, via email

Continued on page 4

LETTERS

Continued from page 3

Proud of you, Noble! Having known you from June 1965, when we joined NDA, I can say we always knew one day you would be there where it matters in the Army. You did not prove us wrong.
Sri (Colonel A Sridharan (Retd)), via email

One feels so proud of Gen Thamburaj's achievements and dedication. Superb! I am sure his past and future contributions will be remembered for long and imbibed by coming generations.
Wg Cdr DK Bhardwaj, via email

The article on BS Yeddyurappa notes a few negatives of his career in passing. His worst contributions have been ignored. When the BJP emerged as the single largest party, he innovated a political gimmick – buy an opposition MLA, ask him to resign, make him a Minister and then ask him to contest on a BJP ticket. And all this with Reddy money. Now, everyone fears that all politicians will use this gimmick. One more unethical practice will have been added to our politics.
Subhash Mendhapurkar, via email

The interview of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Secretary, Raghaw Sharan Pandey, conveys a lot about India's energy needs and its quest for gaining control over such sources. Your publication can generate serious debate on regional prospects and encourage policymakers to think of the teeming millions beyond their national boundaries.
Shamim-ur-Rahman, Daily Dawn, Karachi, via email

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COVER STORY

governance | trapped bureaucracy

Continued from page 2

have become the servants of politicians who come into power often winning no more than 29 per cent of the popular vote. This, after all, is the reality of India's first-past-the-post modern democracy.

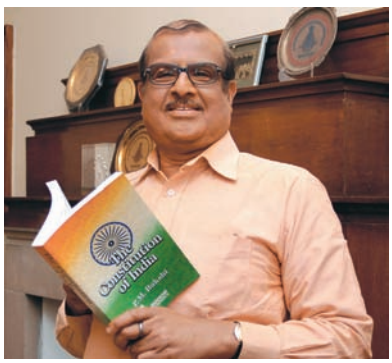
Once upon a time, when Indian democracy was still in its infancy, bureaucrats were considered and impediment to the growth of a newly-free nation. In comparison to the politicians of yesteryear who were clean, driven by vision, dreaming of moulding a new India, bureaucrats reeked of imperial, Raj-oriented, self-perpetuating power.

It followed that the bureaucracy should be kept under control, its designs contained, by the people-empowered authority of politicians. The Minister should not only be involved in policy matters, but also be the master of everything happening in the Ministry. People, in general, thought this was right.

There was no change in popular attitude until the 1970s when criminalization of politics started affecting the lives of Indians. At first, the criminals were used by the politicians, and then they started venturing into politics directly. Money and muscle power rather than principled governance became the deciding force in the political arena.

The new political class that emerged through the process, irrespective of the party or organization, was the sole custodian of politico-administrative authority. The bureaucracy was subservient to this class. Defiance would invite punishment. Barring a handful of conscientious objectors like Aruna Roy who left the IAS to work for the political empowerment of the poor, the rest had no option. Those who dared, occasionally, to revolt were appropriately ciphered.

The common man was caught in a bind as corruption in high places grew.



'We have to make sure that the rural sector develops at the same pace as sectors like services, manufacturing and the urban sector. There has to be balance'
KM Chandrasekhar, Cabinet Secretary

He did not trust the politician. But nor could he look upon the bureaucrat as his saviour or a source of justice. They seemed to be hand-in-glove.

By the 1990s, two historic events changed the trajectory of independent India's journey. One was Mandalisation of politics, and the other liberalization of the economy. Both had many advantages. Mandalisation opened the path to fulfilling aspirations of the lower strata of the population. Liberalization saved the sinking economy and opened the path to fulfilling aspirations of the emerging middle class.

But Mandalisation also brought to centrestage a set of politicians who had scant regard for regulations as well as the rule of law. This was the third assault on the system, already creaking under the weight of criminalization of politics

'Police personnel are perceived as personal armies of State governments. ... Unless the Constitution is amended, it is not possible to create a federal agency. It also needs a political consensus'
Vijay Shanker, ex-CBI director

and spread of corruption.

Politics became a means of personal aggrandizement and liberalization opened up prospects of earning huge money, legally and illegally. The political class, bereft of credibility, brazenly dominated the system.

The system needed correction. And increasing numbers of bureaucrats began to realize that they must shoulder their share of responsibility for the sake of the survival of the spirit and vision of the nation.

Through the loopholes that the political class forgot to plug emerged people like TN Seshan, the Election Commissioner who took on the mightiest without fear. A floodgate opened. The judiciary stepped in. Politicians cried themselves hoarse over judicial activism. But people benefitted. The midday meal scheme in schools, for example, was a result of judicial intervention. NGOs jumped into the fray. Aruna Roy, the ex-bureaucrat, led a successful grassroots campaign for the most powerful tool of people's empowerment – the Right to Information – with the backing of many dedicated bureaucrats like former Cabinet Secretary Prabhat Kumar.

The political class had to yield. In addition, the emergence of the Vigilance Commission with its website, consumer courts, and related watchdog bodies headed by bureaucrats have given relief to the common man.

But the forces that threaten fair and

'The basic concept of the Constitution, the right to live with dignity, has not been realized; 25 per cent is still living below the poverty line'

Prabhat Kumar, ex-Cabinet Secretary

impartial governance in India are ever present. India is now an attractive international market. The "growth engine" is being projected as if India has already joined the elite club of the developed world notwithstanding its grinding poverty. It is also serving as a propaganda vehicle for politicians and businessmen to justify greed, and self-aggrandizement as the natural corollaries of a hugely prosperous India.

THE argument is not whether to globalize or not, nor against growth and prosperity. The question is, prosperity for whom and at what cost?

What is the reaction of the bureaucracy? In their own guarded way all top bureaucrats who have spoken to *gfiles* on the record have said they feel trapped. They are unable to act as a deterrent to the personal aggrandizement of politicians and vested interests who have been treating the Indian state as a private milch cow. They have no power to bust the politician-businessman nexus. They have no power to launch a fight against the humongous corruption thriving at all levels of governance. They have no power to put a stop to non-governance.

Here's what they have told *gfiles* over the last two years:

Wajahat Habibullah, Chief Information Commissioner, said in April 2007: "The Right to Information Act (RTI) is the most important legislation in independent India. People consider it to be their law...The government is cool about it but individual officers are enthusiastic. They are eager to implement it. So, at the institutional level there is a certain reluctance to share information. You could see that the government wanted to amend the RTI Act to withhold official notings on files. The officials are not averse to the notings being accessible. An honest officer is only too keen that his notings be seen. It is the political class that is opposed. But, thanks to the media debate, the government had to step back."

Is the bureaucracy well equipped to face the challenges of development? Here's what Yogendra Narain, the then Secretary General of the Rajya Sabha, said in July 2007: "The workload is too much. The bureaucracy is reeling under pressure. The Centre has already reduced its employees from 38 to 34 lakh. The total bureaucracy comes to approximately one crore fifty lakh. The administrator-population ratio comes to around 1:60, which is the lowest in the whole Asian region. Every day you are announcing new schemes, new programmes and the machinery is the same. You are opening the door for corruption. We need more bureaucrats to make India's growth engine more productive."

Often, fingers are pointed at the bureaucracy for failing to cater to the poorer people. Hear what former Cabinet Secretary Prabhat Kumar, who topped the 1963 IAS exam, said in an interview (August 2007): "...I call the past fifty years a period of shame for our governance. The basic concept of the

Constitution, the right to live with dignity, has not been realized; 25 per cent of our population is still living below the poverty line. ... The total orientation for development needs a change."

By their own admission, bureaucrats have pinpointed the problems. They are eager to jump in. Alas, they can act only when backed by politicians. This is what BK Chaturvedi, ex-Cabinet Secretary and Planning Commission member, said in September 2007: "Districts cannot progress on their own without investments in the economy. It is only after major investments are made in infrastructure, education, health, transport, power and telecom that the country can develop. ... I am Member in charge of UP in the Planning Commission. I often wonder, can India progress without UP progressing at a faster rate? I am a strong votary of some of the large states with lower income getting a strong push so that we progress rapidly as a nation and take our rightful place."

Another take from Kripa Narayan Srivastava, a 1948-batch civil servant: "I often wonder why we have not been able to take the poor of this country along with us. We know the reason yet are helpless to do anything about it. The caste system has been exploited. I call upon the new generation of civil servants to shed the fear of transfers and say no to unfair diktats. In spite of many drawbacks, and ups and downs in the growth of the Indian economy, I see a silver lining. India is developing very fast in the right direction. We only need to be cautious and keep the welfare of the downtrodden at the centre of all our developmental planning and implementation."

But somewhere someone would have to fix responsibility. One such organ was CAG. This is what VN Kaul, Comptroller and Auditor General, said (August 2007) about those who escape unhurt after being named: "The response from

'We have grossly neglected the natural water bodies. Water is available but it has been contaminated by defecation in the open and mishandling of the water bodies'

Shantha Sheela Nair,
ex-Secretary, Drinking Water Supply

the Central and State governments has to improve. It is a lengthy process.... The problem with the government is that its response is often dismal."

Vice-President Hamid Ansari said on Civil Services Day: "The difficulty lies in demarcating the fine line between political like-mindedness and political opportunism. It is rarely articulated coherently and inevitably surfaces in the day-to-day functioning of the administrative structure. ... A distinguished former Cabinet Secretary has noted the tendency by political parties to use the bureaucratic machine as a substitute for the lack of active field cadres and it thus becomes an alternative cadre for the parties in power."

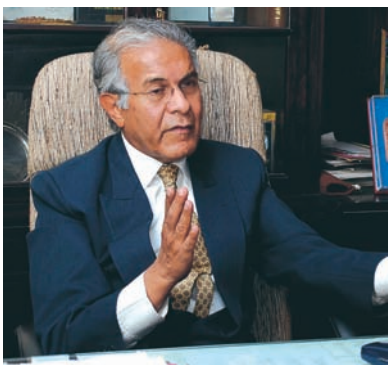
Here a pertinent question is, what sort of pressure is exerted by politicians and what happens if the bureaucrat resists it. Read about Bikram Sarkar's experience (March 2008): "After I assumed the post of Chairman, Calcutta Port Trust, on December 22, 1993 the Minister of State for Surface Transport asked me to meet him in Delhi for discussion regarding a CPT tender for hiring a despatch vessel. The Minister wanted me to select AKAM shipping company's vessel (represented by one Captain Kamboj, who the Minister said was close to him). The Tender Committee, on examination of the "technical bid" of AKAM, rejected it as the vessel did not conform to the technical specification/ requirement. When I conveyed this to the Minister, he was annoyed. I expressed my inability to accept the AKAM offer as the Tender Committee selected another company's vessel after the tender. Subsequently, in early 1994, CPT issued a tender notice asking for a pilot vessel on hire for transporting CPT pilots to the sandhead in the Bay of Bengal. AKAM participated in the tender but was again rejected as it failed to fulfil the conditions. On May 13, 1994 the Minister phoned me from Delhi at the Airport Hotel, Calcutta where the Secretary of the Ministry was holding a meeting with me and other port officers. He asked why AKAM was rejected again. I replied that its vessel would not serve the purpose. To this, he said angrily, 'What are you doing? You can't oblige your Minister. This time I am not going to listen to anything. See that AKAM's ship is selected.' The file was then referred to the Ministry for advice and direction. (The file was never returned to CPT.) While the port was recording an upswing in all respects (during my initial 10-month tenure, the revenue surplus of CPT registered a

jump from Rs 44 crore to Rs 88 crore), I was told by the Minister to go on leave on July 20, 1994."

This is an eye-opener. And, though such extremes are not always the case, here's what SY Quraishi, Election Commissioner, said (November 2007): "The ruling and the opposition parties realize, especially when out of power, just how much they stand to gain from our interventions. ...The bureaucracy is often linked to the government in power."

BUREAUCRATS have been articulate and incisive in identifying the nature and depth of the problems eroding the entire system. They vary vastly in nature. More often than not, Ministers occupy their chairs without a smidgeon of knowledge about administration, governance or the mission of their Ministries. In today's complex world, the problems are more often than not of a technical nature. Numerous senior bureaucrats have told *gfiles*, subtly, about the solutions. Only, they fall on deaf ears.

Nripendra Mishra, Chairman, Telecom Regulatory Authority, in May 2007: "The problem with rural telephony is that there is no infrastructure like power, housing, liveable conditions. Even BSNL has a negative flow of funds in rural telephony in some areas. The government gives Access Definite Charge to those providing rural telephony. I recall that the Planning Commission would plan to finish the waiting list for new telephone connections in a particular area. But now the situation has changed, you go and get the connection at once." When asked about number portability, he said, "We made a recommendation to DoT in 2005. They are yet to decide. Number portability requires a lot of investment in infrastructure." It has not yet been decided.



'RTI is the most important legislation in independent India. People consider it to be their law...The government is cool about it but individual officers are enthusiastic'

Wajahat Habibullah,
Chief Information Commissioner

MP Narayanan, former Chairman, Coal India (October 2007): "The paradox is that the triangle of businessman, bureaucrat and politician has a hold over the PSU. They enjoy power without responsibility, authority without accountability."

Pronab Sen, Chief Statistician of India, said categorically in December 2007: "The employment exchange does not work in India. Rather, it works only for the government and public sector, it does not work for the private sector. ...The Ministry of Labour is putting a lot of emphasis on vocational education. This is easier said than done. Finding teachers to teach vocational skills is difficult. For one, it requires people willing to adopt a hands-on approach. This is difficult to find in a government set-up. It would require the changing of mindset. If you want to teach carpentry, you would need to hire an experienced carpenter– someone around 45 years of age. But government rules forbid hiring anyone of that age." We do not know whether anyone at any corner of the corridor of power ever discussed it in the past two years.

Pratyush Sinha, then Central Vigilance Commissioner, said (January 2008) about defence deals: "We need to have a system in place which encourages competition. We have persuaded the Ministry of Defence to lay down clearcut procurement procedures." The question still remains, have they been implemented? Let the reader guess.

Satyanand Mishra, Secretary, Department of Personnel and Training, the nodal agency that virtually runs the civil service, revealed in February 2008: "It was realized that the process of consultation in three Ministries – Finance, Law, and Department of Personnel – is long and time-consuming. It was felt that we are risk-averse and, to overcome this drawback, we must try to reduce the process of consultation. There is a 10-tier structure of consultancy prevailing in the government. Starting from the clerk, we move vertically up to the Section Officer, Under-Secretary, Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary, Secretary, Minister and finally the Cabinet. The Prime Minister says we must simplify things and take decisions without fear. We are on the job. We have done it partly, in vigilance cases where the process of clearance has been simplified. We are creating a conducive environment for this. Since the dawn of public-private partnership (PPP) projects, the need to take bold decisions has arisen. We have empowered our officers to take decisions without fear. We are of the view that, even if the decision is wrong, the officer concerned should not be punished – unlike in the past. The government's approach is that deci-

'Both the Central and state governments have not built the capacity of panchayats. Unless you provide them reasonable buildings, essential manpower, essential infrastructure, how will they really function?'

ANP Sinha, Secretary, Panchayati Raj

sions should be fast."

But has the government really taken any decision that has hastened the process of decision-making? Here's the view of Shantha Sheela Nair, Secretary, Drinking Water Supply (April 2008): "We have grossly neglected the natural water bodies. Water is available but it has been contaminated by defecation in the open and mishandling of the water bodies by the rural communities. ...The problem needs to be looked at from three angles: government, village community and panchayat. By harvesting rain water, Khari village of Kutch, with an annual rainfall of just 350 mm and faced with two or three droughts every five years, has become self-sufficient in water. The village no longer needs water from the Narmada grid."

VIJAY Shanker, while he was still CBI director, said in June 2008: "Police personnel are perceived as personal armies of State governments. ... Unless the Constitution is amended, it is not possible to create a federal agency. It also needs a political consensus."

Partha S Bhattacharya, CIL Chairman, has an interesting view (July 2008) on how an imaginative bureaucracy can achieve a lot, if not hindered by vested interests of the political class: "One major activity which used to be there before 2004 was getting coal at notified prices and selling it in the black market at higher prices, mainly to brick manufacturers. We observed that once we issued the delivery order, it used to change hands. We were losing the premium but we could not do anything as we used to sell coal at notified prices. We introduced the system of e-auction. Coal is available on the site and anybody can bid. That has put a stop to the coal mafia selling coal at higher prices."

There is no field in which the bureaucrats running this nation lack expertise or a remedial vision. Take basic education. Why is the dropout rate so high in India? Here was a prompt response (August 2008) from Arun Kumar Rath, Secretary, School Education and Literacy: "A gamut of factors. More than parental apathy, it is lack of access. It is also linked to quality. If the school is not providing quality education. If the parents feel the child is going to school and coming back without learning, they consider it a waste of time. Take girls. We are taking a series of measures for girls' education. The school must be gender-sensitive. The girl child must feel welcome in the school atmosphere. The national curriculum framework of 2005 insists on gender sensitivity of the curriculum. More and more women teachers should join as girls feel encouraged in their presence. Another initiative we are taking is toilets. A study has shown that if you provide separate toilets for girls, enrolment goes up and the dropout rate goes down."

'I saw 16 Secretaries of Tourism in UP in my 5-year tenure in the Ministry of Tourism. No Secretary stayed more than 3-4 months. There is no political and administrative commitment for growth of tourism in UP'
Amitabh Kant, Additional Secretary

Rakesh Mehta, Chief Secretary of Delhi, talked about traffic chaos in the nation's capital in October 2008: "Big cities solved this problem by two measures, restriction on car ownership and multi-mode transport system. There is no third solution." Is anybody listening?

Satyanarayana Dash, Secretary, Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, declared in December 2008 that his challenge was making the 16 loss-making PSUs profitable.

BK Sinha, Director General, National Institute of Rural Development, said in March 2009: "Grassroots planning has never been implemented."

Just a month after his retirement, former vice-chief of the Army, Lt General Noble Thamburaj, said, "We should not prepare for the last war but for the future war. The dimensions of war are changing. The Indian military has to be ready for terrorism and fourth generation war games. We have challenges to face – cyber wars, media wars, psycho wars and the war against non-state players."

What about India's oldest and most cherished endeavour of empowering rural India and decentralising decision-making – a concept embraced by Gandhi and every politician who swears allegiance to the flag—Panchayati Raj? Listen, again, to ANP Sinha (September 2009), Secretary, Panchayati Raj : "Both the central and state governments have not built the capacity of the panchayats. Unless you provide them reasonable buildings, essential manpower, essential infrastructure, how will they really function?"

Collectively, this is damning indictment of the system by some of the most accomplished administrators at the helm of the nation's affairs. They know what ails the country. They know what must be done. They know how to do it. They are aching to be heard.

Is anybody listening? g

—with inputs from Diptendra Raychaudhuri

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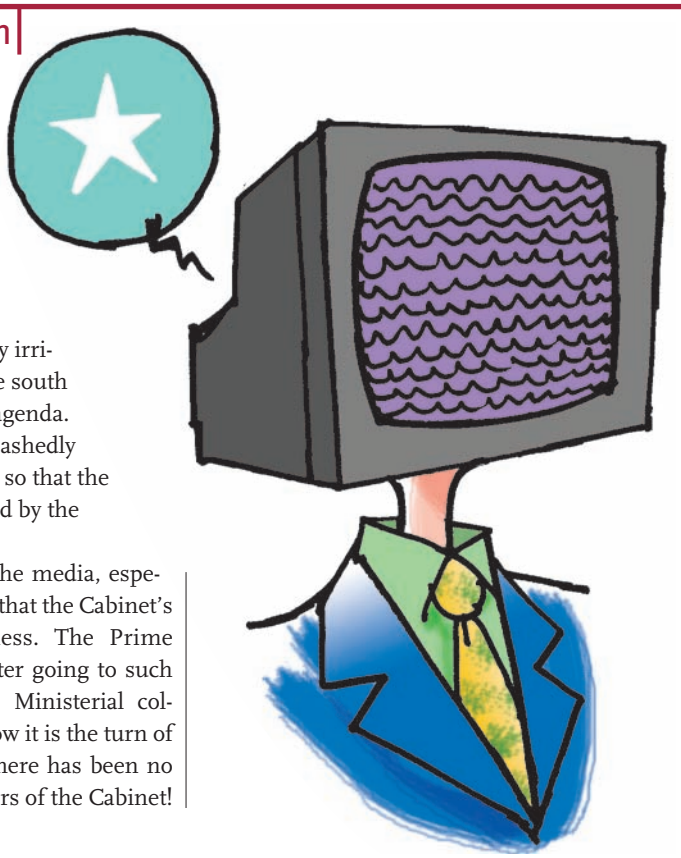


Manmohan loses his cool
minister's lobbying irks pm

THE grapevine has it that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is mighty irritated over a Union minister from the south lobbying to stall an item on the Cabinet's agenda. The suave and bespectacled Minister unabashedly visited his colleagues to seek their support so that the matter would not be taken up and approved by the Cabinet.

The Minister's family has interests in the media, especially television, and he told his colleagues that the Cabinet's approval would ruin the family business. The Prime Minister did not take kindly to the Minister going to such lengths as to lobby personally with his Ministerial colleagues. The matter was duly approved. Now it is the turn of the said Minister to be upset. However, there has been no murmur of dissent from the other members of the Cabinet!

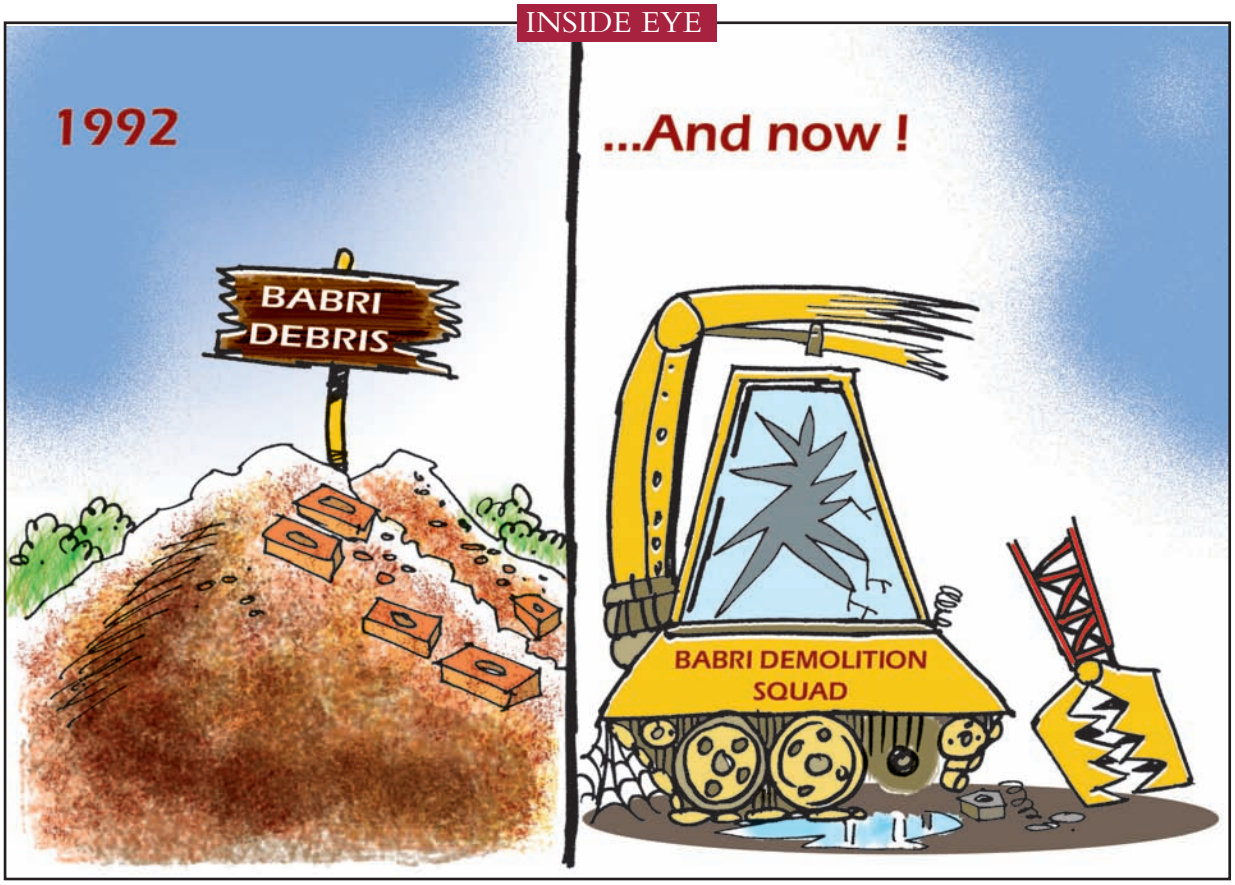
Sharma averts showdown with Pawar
commerce, food secys in war of letters

THE Union Commerce and Industry Ministry recently displayed presence of mind and tact in avoiding a showdown with a major ally, the Nationalist Congress Party of Agriculture and Food Minister Sharad Pawar. The bone of would-be contention was the PMO's directive to import foodgrains should the need arise despite comfortable buffer stocks. Had the Commerce Ministry pushed for import of foodgrains, it would have raised Pawar's hackles. So Commerce Minister Anand Sharma chose to skip the meeting of the Empowered Group of Ministers to consider the PMO's request to import foodgrains.

Sharma appeared peeved with Commerce Secretary Rahul Khullar writing a strongly worded letter to the Union Food Ministry, which apparently angered Pawar. The exchange of letters between the Secretaries of Commerce and Food are now being sought under the provisions of the Right to Information Act by the political establishment to understand what had transpired which led to the two senior civil servants locking horns.

Praful fiddles while Indian burns...
lifestyle at odds with airline losses

THE flamboyant lifestyle of Praful Patel, the former Jet Airways director-turned industrialist-turned politician, is well known. The chum of Sharad Pawar travels with industrialist Vijay Mallya in the latter's private jet, holds his daughter's wedding in Udaipur Palace, has a liking for watches and is a health freak. At his Cee Jay mansion in Worli, a line-up of brand new cars hits the eye besides a well-appointed, luxurious gym, a dining



ILLUSTRATIONS: ARUNA

hall table that seats 32 guests and a fabulously stocked bar.

Now, all this would be very well and the Civil Aviation Minister's private business were it not for the loss amounting to Rs 5000 crore suffered by Indian and the prospect of the same amount of losses in the next five years.

Azhagiri weighs anchor in Delhi babu shifted from ministry

AFTER finding it difficult to get his bearings in the national capital till recently, Union Fertilizers Minister MK Azhagiri of the DMK has, after some delay, moved into his official bungalow in Kamaraj Lane. This provided an opportunity for the family to have a house warming. The occasion also served to send a signal to his detractors that he is now firmly entrenched in Delhi and not breezing off to Chennai at the drop of a hat.

Azhagiri has proved that he has a say in Delhi's matters. The PMO acceded to his request to shift senior civil servant Atul Chaturvedi from the Fertilizers Ministry. Chaturvedi has been transferred to the Ministry of Steel. But MPs in the rival AIADMK camp are wondering aloud why a Union Minister should be wary of a bureaucrat!

Swarm of the RED LOCUSTS

The success of the Naxalites in making inroads into every class suggests that grounds for revolution, however embryonic, do exist in the country

INTERNAL security is an important dimension of national security, the maintenance of which is a fundamental duty of any government. A government's claim to legitimacy and public loyalty arise from the satisfaction it can give to its citizens over issues of security. Judged by this criterion, the public record has not been too good in India.

In 2004, Naxalism was officially identified by the Centre as the most dangerous internal threat facing the country. In 2009, exactly the same description was officially given again to this phenomenon. The conclusion seems inescapable that while the nature of the problem was understood, no practical solution could be devised to tackle it in the inter regnum.

Naxalism grew from a minuscule movement launched by Charu Muzumdar in Naxalbari village of Darjeeling district, West Bengal. The movement was carved out by him in 1967 after a split with the ultra-Left sections of the CPI (Marxists). The movement, basically anti-landlord, acquired the nomenclature of CPI (Marxist-Leninist) in 1969. A similar group, calling itself Marxist Communist Centre (MCC), was operating in the south. The CPI (M) and the MCC merged in 2004 and became the CPI (Maoist), appropriating the Maoist doctrine of revolutionary agrarian war to seek power through armed violence and surrounding urban centres. Their activities soon accounted for 90 per cent of the revolutionary armed action in India. This brand of revolutionary activities came to be described broadly as Naxalism in recognition of Naxalbari, from where the bugle of armed revolutionary agrarian revolt was first sounded.

The CPI (Maoist) stuck for long to the Maoist doctrine of waging a people's war from the countryside and set about increasing its influence and presence in a planned way. According to the government, as of today, 20 states of India, covering 223 districts, feel the brunt of its progress in a major or minor way. Its growth is methodical. It is setting up a state committee as it expands into a state. Two special area committees exist, one for UP, Uttarakhand and North Bihar, and the other for West Bengal, Jharkhand and the rest of Bihar. The three most deeply affected regions – Dandakaranya, North Telengana and the Andhra Pradesh-Orissa border – have each a special zonal committee to oversee the movement's activities and growth in these areas. What all these committees together represent can be called the first well-knit organizational structure and super-structure for waging a war of revolution in India. If one looks at the land area where the Naxalites hold sway, it has to be conceded that Naxalism has come a long way in these four decades plus from its birth in Naxalbari.

The CPI (Maoist) has also widened its tactics. It is no longer an agrarian-driven movement. For some time it has been trying to make common cause with other centres of rural and urban dissatisfaction, tribal or non-tribal. All sections of marginalized populations are being targeted to enlarge its base. "Land for the tiller" is not the only war cry. Attempts are on to bring all those aboard its bandwagon who regard themselves as victims of globalization, privatization, unemployment, lay-offs, displacements caused by project development and the like, or those who have been ignored or left behind in socio-economic progression. Industrialized areas appear to offer them special opportunities. The industrial cities of Surat, Ahmedabad, Pune and Mumbai in western India and Kolkata, Ranchi, Dhanbad and Bhilai in the east are on the Naxal radar for enhanced penetration.

The roping in of disaffected groups as allies was a classic united front tactic of the international communist move-

REUTERS

Indian police officer Atindranath Dutta (C), with armed Maoists: striking deep

The Home Ministry, until P Chidambaram took over, was inclined to play down the Naxal threat, treating it merely as a law and order problem police would be able to tackle

ment in the last century. The Naxal leadership has appropriated it. This has also brought a bonus. The urban centres of disaffection against the state are often led by educated leaders, usually from affluent or semi-affluent backgrounds, who get deflected to an agitational agenda for ideological, moral, personal or societal reasons.

WHERE united fronts have been successfully established, the leadership of the Naxals also lands in their lap. The beneficiary is ultimately Naxalism. Such associations mostly remain and function at the covert level. Some intellectuals, human rights workers, and political or media activists seem to belong to this category. In other words, no class is left out. Semi-proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and even national bourgeoisie are tapped for support and collaboration. The success in making such inroads seems to suggest that some grounds for a revolution, howsoever embryonic, do exist in the country.

The Naxal united front tactics have resulted in exploitation of sentiments and of people involved or affected by issues like the Singur agitation, the Nandigram uprising against SEZs, the murder of Dalits at Khairlanji, and farmer suicides in Vidarbha and elsewhere.

Naxalism and its threat to the state have been growing steadily in the past 40 years. The ideology appeals to the deprived and downtrodden. They have a coherent organization whose members are ready for sacrifice. They have visionary plans of seizing political power through armed violence. Their strength should not be counted by the number of those with arms or by incidents staged; their strength lies in the numbers who have been given military training. They display a robust will and determination of purpose.

Juxtaposed against this is the Centre's recent awakening to the complexity of the problem and its bid to devise a counter-strategy. The Home Ministry, until P Chidambaram took over, was inclined to play down the Naxal threat, treating it merely as a law and order problem which the bureaucrats and police would be able to tackle at their own level. The earlier less-than-enthusiastic approach of the Centre could have been caused by the Constitutional division of labour and powers between the Centre and the states. In the case of a law and order problem, the states have a Constitutional right to deal with it. The Centre could claim only a role for co-ordination which opposition-ruled States could effectively ignore. The Salwa Judum experiment of arming self-defence volunteers in Chhattisgarh to counter Naxalites, though somewhat successful, has been unacceptable in other states and was so earlier even to the Centre. The Chidambaram strategy combines armed action by Central paramilitary forces with a heavy dose of development. The states have been invited to send their own police forces to join the hunt for Naxalites.

Under this pilot scheme, codenamed Operation Greenhunt, about 50,000 men will be deployed in five of the most affected states in the near future. Most will have been put through some special training before action begins. In the tribal areas covered by the CPI (Maoist) special zones, there are large areas where the state has never been able to penetrate. Land where state authority fails to reach remains ungoverned. Naxals rule there, calling them liberated areas. The government's new strategy aims to physically drive out the Naxals from such areas and introduce governance by building roads and establishing schools, health clinics, markets, panchayats. g

The writer is former Secretary, RAW

The great Indian LAND GRAB

Forced acquisition of land is creating unsustainable development, depriving the peasant of shelter and livelihood while fattening the real estate business

by MG Devasahayam

NEARLY two-and-a-half centuries ago, in 1770, Oliver Goldsmith wrote these poignant verses in his pastoral poem, *The Deserted Village*: "Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey; Where wealth accumulates, and men decay; Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade; A breath can make them, as a breath has made; But a bold peasantry, their country's pride, when once destroyed, can never be supplied."

Peasantry is described as the "class constituted by small farmers, tenants, sharecroppers, and labourers on the land where they form the main workforce in agriculture and forestry". It is this "peasantry" that even today constitutes the backbone of India and feeds the 1.1 billion population, nearly half of which is undernourished as per global reports. Yet, what is happening on the ground in the name of development is the destruction of peasantry by depriving them of their land and in the process destroying the country's food security.

In January 2008, the 15-member Committee on State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms, headed by the present Minister for Rural Development, CP Joshi, with BK Sinha, Director General, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad as the chief author, submitted its report. "The 'temples' of modern India," the report said, "reduced millions of tribal people to ecological refugees"; now "the minerals seen as the 'building blocks' of modern India" are putting them "at risk of losing their land through acquisition and further disruption of their societies and economies".

"Temple" was Prime Minister Nehru's catch-phrase. This government has adopted the "building blocks" phrase. The fight to protect the tribal land is "the single-largest internal security threat" to the country. In the PM's address to Parliament in June this year, he said: "If left-wing extremism continues to flourish in parts which have natural resources of minerals, the climate for investment would certainly be affected."

REUTERS

A woman and a child displaced by economic development projects in Mumbai: nowhere to go

In recent full-page newspaper advertisements, Vedanta, one of the world's largest mining corporations, stated to have lease of Rs 4 lakh crore worth of bauxite mines in tribal Orissa, said: "India's abundant natural resources like coal, iron ore, bauxite and precious/semi-precious metals, on a par with countries like Australia, Canada, South Africa and Brazil, can contribute significantly to India's GDP and become an alternative revenue source for infrastructure development in the country."

The message is clear – huge investments by moneybags in mining and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is all that is needed by India and for this the mines and minerals of the tribal heartland must be secured even if this means destruction of the peasantry and their precious forest wealth.

Governments in New Delhi and the States are pursuing an *amir aadmi* agenda while mouthing *aam aadmi* slogans.

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Destruction of peasantry

The stark reality of "destruction of peasantry" by the state stared me in the face when I reviewed land acquisition for SEZs in Tamil Nadu as a member of the citizens' panel. The state seems to have two faces. One is the "pro-poor" façade with an avalanche of freebies like one-rupee-kilo-rice, colour TV and gas stove. The other is forced acquisition of land belonging to the poor and the deprived by misusing the near-draconian Tamil Nadu Acquisition of Land for Industrial Purposes Act, 1997. These lands are then given to government agencies, private developers and speculators to earn huge profits in projects like SEZs, satellite cities, IT townships, gated communities and luxury real estate that are claimed as being in the public interest! Incidentally, Tamil Nadu has the largest number of SEZs (139) after Maharashtra.

The findings of this study are startling. Some are worth reproducing:

(a) Forced acquisition is being resorted to to create parasitic "land banks" and for this purpose large extents of fertile agricultural land belonging to small and marginal farmers, used for ages to grow vegetables, lentils, flowers etc., are deceitfully classified as dry in revenue records. Some of these areas have been under paddy and sugarcane cultivation. This poses a serious threat to the local food security.

(b) "Common property resource" lands used by the village community, mostly landless peasants, for cultivating fuel, fodder and forest trees are referred to as "wasteland" to facilitate acquisition.

(c) Land allotted to industry and SEZs is far in excess of their real requirements and vast tracts that would otherwise have been productively used by farmers are left unused and will ultimately be converted into real estate, in violation of the original purpose of stimulating real economic growth through productive activity.

(d) Compensation handed out to land owners affected by SEZs have been paltry and well below market value. Even so, payments are delayed and political middlemen and corrupt bureaucrats get a cut of such payments.

(e) Implementation of SEZ policy is ad hoc and allotment of land for industrial/SEZ purposes is arbitrary and non-transparent.

(f) Lands allotted to landless families under the Bhoodan movement and to rescue bonded labour have been recklessly and heartlessly acquired. Even land allotted to ex-service personnel is not spared.

(g) Revenue officials in charge of land acquisition have been resorting to abuse, fudging of records, deception, false promises and threats to get land owners to sign documents foregoing their land. Police force has been used to coerce people.

(h) The Development Commissioner of a SEZ is the de facto

The second UPA government has assigned this mission to the Union Home Ministry. While the Home Minister has been known to represent mining companies as legal counsel, the Home Secretary was a diehard champion of SEZs during his tenure as Commerce Secretary. On their own, both would certainly like to see delivery of possession to the land-hungry mining/SEZ "investors"! This also appears to be a political agenda common to the BJP and Congress, as can be seen from recent happenings in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Hence the "Operation Greenhunt" against "Marxist rebels" planned and launched in consultation with US counter-insurgency forces. This "war on tribal terror" will deploy crack commandos and paramilitary forces and possibly the Army and Air Force. And it will hit mainly the poor peasants and tribals of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal and Maharashtra, warns a protest document drafted by activist Arundhati Roy and a group of progressive intellectuals that has been submitted to the PM.

Facts about the country and its economy stated in the document are extremely distressing: 80 per cent of households have no access to safe drinking water; 77 per cent live on less than Rs 20 a day; only 42 per cent houses have electricity; 93 per cent of the workforce is of informal nature, lacking employment, work and social security; close to 60 per cent of rural households are effectively landless; in

The state seems to have two faces. One is the 'pro-poor' façade with an avalanche of freebies like one-rupee-kilo-rice, colour TV and gas stove. The other is forced acquisition of land belonging to the poor.

REUTERS

A worker walks through a dry fish pond in a field earmarked for a SEZ in Maharashtra: harvest of shame?

"zamindar" of the whole tract. Corporates are given a free hand within the area, do not have to pay taxes, are not asked any questions, and need not pay attention to the rights of individuals or communities within the zone.

(i) Most of the benefits accrue to foreign companies, as both the seed money and the profits are in foreign currency. Developers are getting tracts of hundreds of acres, in some cases much more, in a state where land ceiling laws restrict family holdings to 60 acres!

(j) Indiscriminate acquisition and displacement due to SEZs increases the unskilled workforce supply, thereby driving down wages. Farmers and farm workers thus uprooted are forced to survive on state largesse and charity like NREGS and one-rupee-kilo-rice scheme, this being termed as "inclusive growth".

the 1997-2007 period, 182,936 farmers committed suicide and the number of the "poor and vulnerable" increased from 811 million in 1999-2000 to 836 million in 2004-05.

AT the other extreme, the millionaire population in India grew in 2007 by 22.6 per cent from the previous year – higher than any other country. Governments in New Delhi and the States are pursuing an *amir aadmi* agenda while mouthing *aam aadmi* slogans. Despite numerous public protests, negative Parliamentary Committee reports and warnings from academics, the Indian state has gone ahead with the establishment of 531 SEZs, a totally unsustainable development model which deprives the peasantry of land, shelter and livelihood, while fattening the real-estate business.

This 'war on tribal terror' will hit mainly the poor peasants and tribals of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal and Maharashtra, warns a protest document drafted by activist Arundhati Roy

Around 60 million people have faced displacement between 1947 and 2004; involving about 25 million hectares of land, including 7 million hectares of forests and 6 million hectares of other common property resources. Only one in every three of the displaced people has been resettled.

This is tragic hijacking of grassroots governance. Civil servants and police are assisting the *amir aadmi* in their land-grab agenda instead of providing life and livelihood support to the *aam aadmi*. The resultant turmoil and unrest is termed a threat to national security and Indian society is being managed and manipulated to believe it is necessary to eliminate these "terrorists". g

He had all the qualities of a sincere, sober and successful bu r

Rajiv Gandhi's pen u

by BN Uniyal

Gopi Arora, an IAS officer of the 1957 batch (UP cadre), died on November 5, 2009 at the age of 76. He held many key positions such as Secretary, Finance and I&B, Economic Minister at the Indian embassy in Moscow, and India's representative at the IMF. However, it was his stint in the PMO as Special Secretary to Rajiv Gandhi for which he is remembered.

BEFORE Gopi Arora, there were powerful bureaucrats aplenty but he was the first to be called powerful emphatically and openly, and so often and by so many that, towards the end of his career in the PMO, the word began to sound trite and even banal. And, when some people, especially journalists, found the word not powerful enough to convey Gopi's "enormous clout" in the PMO, they raised the pitch and called him "all-powerful" or "most powerful."

Whether Gopi relished or resented this label is difficult to say. He was not the sort to let his face betray thoughts.

He did exercise ample and marked influence on Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and, because of that, on his team of Ministers as well as on the lesser bureaucrats around him at the Centre and in the States, the bosses of key public institutions and, of course, the country's corporate captains. He decided not only the issues that required his approval but also those that merely called for his opinion. He often took decisions in the name of the Prime Minister, communicated the Prime Minister's pleasure or displeasure and conveyed his wishes to the concerned persons and parties.

But did this justify the hurling of the word "powerful" at him as if being powerful or exercising power was the worst thing a bureaucrat could do?

Every bureaucrat in the crucial post of Special Secretary to the PM has done all that Gopi did. PN Haksar did the same

ARUNA

Another reason is that Rajiv Gandhi exposed him too much to the public view by entrusting to him errands which should have been handled by a political person

u reaucrat but aroused intense dislike and disapproval. Why?

ultimate fall guy

during Indira Gandhi's time, though he may have been more subtle in manner. So did VC Pande during VP Singh's Prime Ministership after Gopi was ousted from the PMO.

Why, then, did Gopi arouse such intense dislike and disapproval from so many? He had all the qualities of a sincere, sober and successful bureaucrat. He was hard-working, subtle, adroit and utterly unassuming, kept in the background as much as possible, and rarely, if ever, opened his mouth in public. He never exhibited swagger or hauteur, or engaged in banal bureaucratic small talk, bitching or back-biting. He tried to be nice with everybody who came in contact with him though he had to be tough when hard decisions were taken.

One answer to the riddle is that every regime needs a fall guy or a whipping boy. Gopi became one for the Rajiv Gandhi regime. In the beginning, everyone was so charmed by Rajiv Gandhi's sincerity and simplicity, his guileless smile and innocent utterances that they couldn't believe he could have taken or initiated unpalatable decisions and deeds. It was assumed that such decisions must be the work of someone else, someone adept in the wily ways of government. Who could that be? Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, Gopi Arora – or all three! So, in the early years one or the other of the trio would be blamed, depending on one's information, preference or prejudice. At the start, Gopi was the easiest target. When the two Aruns deserted Rajiv Gandhi, he was left alone to serve as the fall guy.

Another reason is that Rajiv Gandhi exposed him too much to the public view by entrusting to him errands which should have been handled by a political person.

ONCE, when told people were commenting on his enormous power, Gopi replied typically, "A civil servant in my position draws his power from his boss. It is he who decides how long a rope to give to his civil servant. Power is his. We are merely his creatures. So, praise belongs to him and blame to us." This is not very far from the truth, at least in Gopi's case. He was not the sort of bureaucrat who would exceed his brief or twist it to serve his own ends. Also, when it came to giving advice or expressing opinion he was as frank as anybody in his position could be.

Occasionally, he might have used dissimulation to carry a point through or planted a story through some media friends. Such acts by bureaucrats invoke reproach not only from the media but often also from politicians, though no politician ever hesitates to resort to such practices himself. The problem in such cases lies not so much in the conduct of the bureaucrat concerned but in the very practice of engaging bureaucrats for political purposes that eventually arouses not only peer disapproval but also public wrath.

But Gopi was a political creature himself. Not that he had any political ambitions. He was political in the sense that he had ideas about which way the politics of the country required steering. In his opinion, that way lay towards the Left, though not the formal Left as represented by the communists. He was a progressive in the 1970s sense of the term.

His progressive outlook brought him to the notice of DP Dhar who took him as his Special Secretary when he became Planning Minister in the early 1970s. Gopi enjoyed that position. He could give full expression to his political views through his boss with whom he enjoyed a great rapport. He met and became friends with many stars of the political Left in the Congress and also in the Left media. During his time with Dhar, first in the Planning Commission and then as his Economic Minister at the Indian embassy in Moscow, he first attracted the attention of Indira Gandhi. The training under Dhar must have proved useful when he was taken to the PMO by Rajiv Gandhi a decade-and-a-half later.

Of all his qualities as a bureaucrat, the most striking were his quick grasp, his facility for writing, and his capacity to work for long hours without a break. He never took Sundays off and was usually the last to leave office. g

(The writer was a political correspondent with a Leftist daily for over two decades, and later edited The Sunday Observer and the Observer of Business & Politics.)

Everyone was so charmed by Rajiv Gandhi's sincerity and simplicity...that they couldn't believe he could have taken or initiated unpalatable decisions and deeds

Onward, women soldiers!

The armed forces have a golden opportunity to set an example for the rest of the nation in having empowered women join them to serve the country

BY COL R HARIHARAN

DURING the past three decades, the traditional male orientation of the armed forces all over the world is undergoing a sex change. As more and more women don the uniform, there are visible cracks in the macho citadels of armed forces. Now they are trying to come to grips with the issue arising from this.

Historically, women have proved they are as good as men in combat. During World War II, 800,000 women served in the Soviet armed forces; nearly 70 per cent of them fought in the frontlines. But armed forces are a little reluctant to recognize this. They have been propagating "masculine values" for centuries, cultivating aggressive male persona as the essence of soldiering. So MCP attitudes are ingrained in many of their traditions. The semantic signature of the male superior attitude is visible in common military parlance. Epithets like "walking like pregnant ducks" and "bunch of school girls" continue to echo in the corridors of their hallowed chambers.

The Indian armed forces are also in the throes of this phenomenon. Recently, the Vice-Chief of the Indian Air Force, Air Marshal PK Barbora, touched off a minor controversy when he said there were financial, operational and cultural constraints in having women fighter pilots. On the other hand, for the first time in India's naval history, two women officers are being inducted in combatant jobs in the Naval Maritime Squadron. They will be working as observers (air borne tacticians) to manage weapons, sensors, radars and navigation on board maritime patrol aircraft.

Air Marshal Barbora was only restating the armed forces' reservations on employing women in frontline combat roles. However, the way he put it was provocative: "if a woman gets pregnant, it will not be fruitful for either the force or her..." as training a fighter pilot costs the government Rs 11.66 crore. After spending so much, "not being able to utilize women operationally would not be a prudent thing," he added.

Women have been serving in the Indian armed forces since World War II. But their intake as officers was only in medical, dental and nursing corps. It was in 1992 that the Indian Army opened the doors of other services for women officers and the Navy and Air Force followed suit. Since then, hairline cracks in the male bastion have widened as more and more women join the forces.

Starting with an initial intake of 50 women officers in 1992, the Army now has 1100 (3.1 per cent) of them in a total strength of 35,377 officers. This is the least among all the three services because the officer-soldier ratio in the Army is less than in the naval and air forces. The Navy has the largest presence with 750 (nearly 7 per cent) women out of a total of 10,760 officers. In the Air Force, out of a total of 7,394 officers, 300 (4.1 per cent) are women.

At present, the Army has the capacity to train 350 women cadets annually in the non-technical stream. Of course their intake in the technical stream is based upon the requirements. Women cadets undergo the same 49 weeks of training as men.

However, gender parity is a little slow in coming. Women are still not treated as equals in terms of engagement, service, and employment. Unlike men, only unmarried women can apply for commission in the Army. Women are eligible for the Short Service Commission (SSC) while their male counterparts can apply for permanent commission after five years of service. This limits the women officers' career to 14 years of service. They have to retire at the peak of their competency, after serving as Lt Col for just one year.

Air Marshal Barbora was only restating the armed forces' reservations on employing women in frontline combat roles. However, the way he put it was provocative.

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President Patil readies for her Sukhoi flight: more than symbolic

Women have proved they are as good as men in combat. In World War II, 800,000 women served in the Soviet forces; nearly 70 per cent of them fought in the frontlines.

Similarly, while all arms and services are open to men, at present women are commissioned only in services and in selected arms like air defence, signals, engineering and intelligence. Even then they are not allowed in close combat duties. But this has more to do with the nation's cultural conditioning and harsh operational conditions in which the Army operates.

The problems regarding employment of women in the armed forces go well beyond the "military mindset". They have their roots in the social and cultural environment of the country and systemic constraints of operations designed for male combatants.

Assertion of gender parity is the order of the day the world over. The pill has made pregnancy optional for women. Growing consumerism is expanding the traditional role of women in the family and more women are compelled to work alongside men. The institution of marriage is no more the end-all for women and single mothers are more readily accepted in society than ever before. The Western world has come to terms with these changes more and women's empowerment is accepted in society. And the increased presence of women in the armed forces is only a part of it. But the process is neither smooth nor complete as women are facing major problems in integrating themselves in the armed forces.

However, these changes are yet to take place fully in our country. Despite cosmetic changes in urban India, the social and cultural environment is still loaded against women. The Indian soldier comes from rural and semi-urban areas where women are treated as second-class citizens. In many parts of the country, female foeticide and bride-burning are endemic even among educated sections of society. In this environment, male chauvinism continues to retard any process which tries to bring about gender equity.

Political parties are still shy of taking up women's issues as the centrepiece of their election campaigns. Without strong political support, women are yet to assert their rights vigorously due to lack of awareness, and caste and religious restrictions in the name of tradition. Women coming from the same social milieu opting for military service represent the small number of pioneers trying to break these barriers. So it is not surprising the armed forces are extremely cautious in handling this politically sensitive issue.

On a recent TV talk show, spirited young women, middle-aged socialites and a few men put up a strong case for allowing women soldiers to fight shoulder to shoulder with men in mixed combat units. I doubt very much whether they understood what they were saying.

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I am sure they would not like their daughters to be cooped up in underground shelters with a dozen or so combat soldiers at altitudes of over 14,000 ft along the borders for months at a time. There is a total lack of privacy for anyone, let alone women.

Very few countries employ a fully integrated military. Even in the US and Israel, where such integration has taken place, rape is a major menace dogging women soldiers. And it is at the hands of their male colleagues. According to Professor Helen Benedict, who has researched the subject, a survey of female veterans of the US from the Vietnam War to the first Gulf War revealed that 30 per cent were raped in the military. Another study of veterans in 2004 from Vietnam to all the subsequent wars found that 71 per cent of the women said they were sexually assaulted or raped while in the military. The results of a 1992-93 study of female veterans of the Gulf War and earlier wars were even more appalling – 90 per cent said they were sexually harassed in the military.

Can our society cope with such issues when they come up in the armed forces as more women enter their portals, when even in the national capital women are not safe from sexual harassment and rape? Society's problems are reflected in the armed forces, although military training instils discipline. So integration of women in the armed forces is going to be a long process. Society has to be more enlightened in the way it treats women if it wants the armed forces to increase the role of women on equal terms with men. And that will not happen merely by sloganeering; it has to become the political agenda of the nation.

That does not mean the armed forces should defer introduction of structural mechanisms to employ women gainfully in a safe environment both during war and peace. The armed forces, renowned for their operational management skills, have a golden opportunity to set an example for the rest of the nation in having empowered women join them to serve the country. g

(The writer is associated with the South Asia Analysis Group and the Chennai Centre for China Studies)

SHARAD SAXENA

Woman soldier inspects male colleagues: fighting fit

Very few countries employ a fully integrated military. In the US and Israel, where such integration has taken place, rape is a major menace dogging women soldiers.

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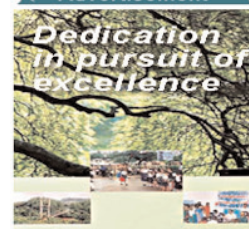

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SUSHMA IS NOT IN THE RUNNING... YET

Why the BJP's most charismatic woman leader, who embodies all the qualities the party needs, is biding her time

by TR RAMACHANDRAN

IN 1980, when the former Jan Sangh was in the process of breaking away from the Janata Party and being rechristened the BJP by Muhammad Currim Chagla, a relatively unknown woman politician from the Janata Party trenches had famously chuckled, "*Aap Bharatiya hain to antarrashtriya kaun hain* (If you are Indian, who is international)?"

Sushma Swaraj has come a long way since that quip, herself becoming the international face of the BJP. Today, the party is looking for a leader or, rather, the RSS is looking for a leader for it. Yet, the affable, attractive and rabble rousing Sushma is not in the running.

Sushma's politicization, self-confessedly, stemmed from association with the ABVP. The RSS ideology of patriotism and nationalism impacted her deeply. When the BJP struck out independently in 1980, she remained a member of the Janata Party in deference to her husband's commitment. She finally joined the BJP in 1984 as a reaction to Syed Shahabuddin's Muslim India campaign in the Janata Party.

Her joining the BJP was acceptable to her husband, she says, because of similarities between the party and the Lohia Socialists. She felt that both Deen Dayal Upadhyaya of the RSS and Ram Manohar Lohia were keen to develop a closer bond between the two parties. Yet, now, when the BJP needs someone to keep Upadhyaya's ideology alive, she feels she is not up to it. So Sushma is not in the running.

Obviously, with an eye on succeeding patron LK Advani as Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, she has calculatedly kept out of the contention for party president. This is no sacrifice *a la* Sonia. It is a deliberate step. Riven by factionalism, the BJP needs more than just a president to infuse life into it after its defeat in the 2009 general election. The party cadre has not enlarged commensurate with the party's growth in the country, the Atal-Advani era has to be given a decent burial, and so on. Sushma is wisely not in the running.

In the past decade, the BJP has gained rather impressive expertise in political (mis)management. A tendency to take things for granted and inability to gauge the people's mood and ground realities led to the party leadership and campaign managers ignoring economic realities and donning the rose-tinted India Shining goggles. Rather than providing policies for ameliorating the misery of the poor, the Gen Next bunch was in a tearing hurry to reclaim power and feather their nests after being ousted in the 2004 general election. The "Advani as PM" campaign propped him up for ridicule. Party boss Raj Nath Singh axed three stalwarts – Jaswant Singh, BC Khanduri and Vasundhara Raje Scindia.

In a political party, a failed leader is akin to an aged tiger – hungry but unable to hunt. So Advani went on the hunt silently. This is when the RSS stepped in and decided to tighten the reins, ending the reign of the tribe of elders who were bent on perpetuating their hegemony rather than encouraging younger, energetic leaders who think out of the box without deviating

This is no sacrifice *a la* Sonia. It is a deliberate step. Riven by factionalism, the BJP needs more than just a president to infuse life into it after its defeat in the 2009 general election.

PHOTOS: FOTOS4INDIA

Sushma with Advani: no more daddy's girl?

The early years

SHE began her political career as a student leader in the 1970s, organizing protests against Indira Gandhi's rule. Born in Ambala, she got an LLB degree from Panjab University, Chandigarh. She was a member of the Haryana Assembly from 1977-82 and again from 1987-90. As a Janata Party MLA in the Devi Lal government, she was Minister for Food and Civil Supplies from 1977-79. She was named the Assembly's best speaker for three consecutive years.

Shifting to the national arena, she contested the Lok Sabha election in 1980, 1984 and 1989 from Karnal but lost each time to Congressman Chiranji Lal Sharma. But she had trained her sights on Parliament and got elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1990. She and husband Swaraj Kaushal were held aloft as the diehard Socialist couple from Haryana who rode the anti-establishment wave during the Emergency. She supported the JP movement and became a part of the Janata Party coalition in 1977.

But none of the four who have been nicknamed D-4 (as in D-Company) in the party – Arun Jaitley, B Venkaiah Naidu, Anant Kumar and Sushma Swaraj – is favoured by the RSS. Hence, Sushma is not in the running.

from the core issue of Hindutva. But none of the four who have been nicknamed D-4 (as in D-Company) in the party – Arun Jaitley, B Venkaiah Naidu, Anant Kumar and Sushma Swaraj – is favoured by the RSS. Hence, Sushma is not in the running.

For the RSS, the next BJP president should be young, modern, and swear by RSS ideology and not ape the Congress in style. If the BJP is going to be a Congress clone, the people will not return it to power. Stalwarts like Vajpayee and Advani had their way and the RSS was chary of poking its nose into the conduct of national politics. With the Atal-Advani era drawing to a close, the RSS ideologues are becoming assertive and do not want a BJP president who will grow larger than the Sangh. They do not want anyone from the BJP headquarters in Delhi to head the party. One more reason why Sushma is not in the running.

Yet, there was a time when Sushma appeared to embody all they want. In the 1996 election campaign, she was projected as a modern woman in control and the anti-thesis of Uma Bharti and Sadhvi Ritambhara. While they campaigned on the basis of their ideological commitment to Hindutva, with no reference to gender, Sushma made efficient use of the gender factor. Her plus point was that of a woman's – being patient, not getting provoked and being incorruptible. She emphasized that empowerment of women must take place within Indian tradition. The RSS viewed her as the quintessential Hindustani *nari* – at once modern and traditional. At the same time, there are those in her party who are embarrassed at her observation of the Karva Chauth fast with media photographers milling around.

Sushma's political journey has had its

Woman of substance

SUSHMA Swaraj has a liberal outlook while remaining steadfast to the party stand. When the Sri Ram Sena attacked pub-going women in Mangalore, she criticized the organization and said her lawyer daughter too visited pubs with her friends but abstained from alcohol. When the Godhra riots occurred, she agreed with Vajpayee that Chief Minister Narendra Modi should go. Yet, when the Opposition called for Modi's sacking, she was firm that the BJP should not be pressured into it.

She has a facility for languages. When she contested the Bellary Parliamentary seat against Sonia Gandhi, she became fluent in Kannada. That was also how she became close to the Reddy brothers in Bellary. They left the Congress for the BJP. She goes once a year to Bellary to perform the Varalakshmi *puja*. Recently, she spoke in Oriya at a rally in Orissa. She played a role in resolving the differences between the Reddy brothers and Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yeddyurappa.

But Sushma can also indulge in histrionics. After the NDA lost the 2004 general election, she threatened to shave her head, wear a white saree, live on groundnuts and sleep on the floor in mourning for the nation if Sonia Gandhi became Prime Minister.

ups and downs but she has pursued her goals singlemindedly. After her marriage to Swaraj Kaushal, the couple was smitten by the Lohia brand of Socialism. Kaushal is a fervent Socialist. Socialism brought Sushma in contact with George Fernandes, Chandra Shekhar and others. Her migration to the BJP raised several eyebrows. Yet, now that her moment to take over the party is at hand, the fact that she will have to dance to the RSS's tune is a deterrent. So Sushma is not in the running.

At 57, she is currently Deputy Leader of the 15th Lok Sabha and the post of Leader of the Opposition should be hers soon. She will then lead the NDA in the 2014 general election and hopefully turn the fortunes of the BJP. The RSS ideologues consider her a leader in the reckoning and the only woman's face of the BJP. The party can bank on her appeal to women voters who constitute 50 per cent of the electorate. The RSS does not doubt that she will follow their diktat.

As a vibrant Parliamentarian, she can be a thorn in the flesh for the Manmohan Singh government. As Leader of the Opposition, she will be strident and aggressive. Her performance in Parliament could catapult her to a new high in the years ahead. And so the presidentship of a beleaguered party for two years is a small sacrifice to make for Prime Ministership in 2012. Hence, Sushma is not in the running. g

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THACKERAY vs

In Raj Thackeray, we are witnessing the making of another Bhindra n

by Diptendra Raychaudhuri

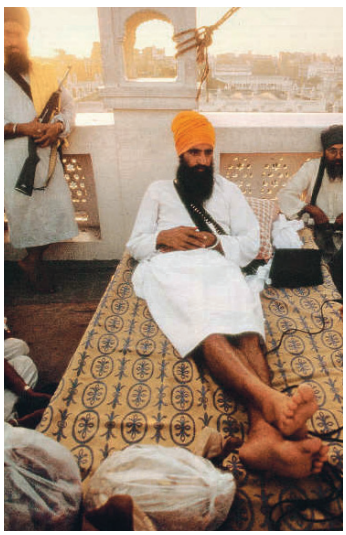
WHEN the Press Club of India oganized a protest on its premises against the Shiv Sena attack on IBN-Lokmat, just about 20 members from the journalistic fraternity turned up apart from some IBN staff. Of course there were extenuating circumstances – many people did not know about the protest, while many others could not wrest themselves away from work. But the poor attendance was telling. Even the influential and informed community of journalists appears to have become inured to such incidents. After all, this is not the first time media personnel have been physically assaulted in Maharashtra.

Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena launched the attack to get the better of rival Raj Thackeray, who is increasingly accruing greater clout as uncle Bal Thackeray's power wanes. Raj has made politics a free-for-all arena. You can take on anyone if you hold some value in electoral politics. In Maharashtra, of all the States, democracy is under attack every day. Following in the footsteps of his uncle, Raj first attacked the hapless Bihari workers. Then, students from other States appearing for competitive exams were thrashed. Having sent his own son to an English-medium school, he is crusading for the Marathi language. The ultimate atrocity was when a legislator was assaulted for taking the oath of office in Hindi.

The politics of violence has turned competitive. And Raj's goons will try to go one better in this politics of rowdyism. His main aim is to decimate his uncle and cousin Uddhav.

The other players, mainly the mighty Maratha, Sharad Pawar, and the Congress party with its innumerable stalwarts, are still looking the other way as the rowdies take over the state. It is lucrative politics for them. People believe Pawar is soft on Raj as he probably visualizes the latter's Maharashtra Navnirman Sena growing mightier five years down the line, and helping him to instal daughter Supriya Sule as Chief Minister. The Congress, on the other hand, believes the split in opposition votes would gradually enable it to recover its supremacy in the State.

As Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said: "The beneficiary of the politics that is going on is the Congress. The party escapes whenever something like this happens which damages the social fabric of society."



Bhindranwale (left) and Raj Thackeray: divisive politics makes an old

Raj formed the MNS in 2006. In 2008, he targeted the "immigrants" in Shivaji Park. And since then he has challenged everyone and everything: the Bachchan family, Chhat *puja*, Karan Johar and Abu Azmi. Bachchan and Johar, who have to survive in Mumbai, accepted his writ as supreme. In future, more and more people will have to do so. The culture of violence is spreading. Even an icon like Sachin Tendulkar is not being spared.

It behoves us to remember that, many years ago, another person trod the same path with impunity and the nation paid a heavy price.

In the beginning, Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was a sort of missionary who preached the basic tenets of Sikhism among rural people. Then he became the leader of the Damdami Taksal, and the seeds of political ambition were sown in him. Zail Singh (Chief Minister till 1977 and Home

The narrow interests of politicians like Sharad Pawar and others is allowing democracy to be held to ransom. Is there no means for redressal against this?

vs THACKERAY

ra nwale and politicians are to blame for the murder of the rule of law

an old fashioned violent entrance in Mumbai with MNS street goons

Minister from 1980) found in him the challenger to the Jat-dominated Akali politics. His agenda was to divide the Akalis and undermine the authority of the Shiromani Akali Dal in order to establish the Congress in the state. The Dal Khalsa, led by Bhindranwale, started its political journey with the secret blessings of Indira Gandhi and Sanjay Gandhi on April 13, 1978. The young Bhindranwale's first foray into politics was a failure. In 1979, he put up 40 candidates for the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) election for 140 seats. His men secured four.

Soon after, Bhindranwale's men started murdering and intimidating people. They killed Nirankaris and journalists. Nirankari leader Baba Gurbachan Singh and his aide were shot dead in Delhi on April 25, 1980. All those against whom warrants were issued either belonged to the Jatha of Bhindranwale or were his relatives or associates, and were under his protection. The Centre, now in the hands of the Congress, did not act. On September 9, 1981, Lala Jagat Narayan was shot dead near Ludhiana. Bhindranwale's name cropped up in each such incident but Congress Chief Minister Darbara Singh was reluctant to act against the young Sant. Bhindranwale became a hero, one who was above the law.

Bhindranwale was a sort of missionary who preached the basic tenets of Sikhism. Zail Singh found in him the challenger to the Jat-dominated Akali politics.

ON September 29, 1981, Dal Khalsa members hijacked an Indian Airlines plane to Lahore. On April 25, 1983, Avtar Singh Atwal, Deputy Inspector General of the Punjab Police, was shot dead as he emerged from the Golden Temple. Everybody knew who was behind these incidents and where he was. When Indira Gandhi finally decided to contain Bhindranwale, it was too late. He was entrenched in the Golden Temple.

Had Bhindranwale been arrested in time, Harcharan Singh Longowal, Prakash Singh Badal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra could have influenced moderate opinion and negotiations could have been peacefully concluded. But that would have strengthened the Akali Dal, something Mrs Gandhi would not allow. The Punjab accord was signed in 1985, after her death.

Sadly, we are seeing history's mistakes being repeated today in Maharashtra. That too at a time when people have categorically rejected the politics of hate.

Is it not the responsibility of the government of the day to implement rule of law? Why is Raj Thackeray not behind bars?

The narrow interests of politicians like Sharad Pawar and others is allowing democracy to be held at ransom. Is there no means for redressal against this? If the Supreme Court has taken the initiative to book those guilty of the Gujarat pogrom, can it not act *suo motu* when perpetrators of violence go scot free? These are questions being asked by ordinary people, those who have made India a mature democracy and are being forced to watch helplessly while the leaders now destroy it.

Posterity should know it was not the people of Maharashtra who were to blame for the rise of Raj Thackeray. Like the people in most parts of the country, they held out against the politics of hate and violence for years. It was the rulers who failed them. That too, intentionally. g

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TRACKING

For a complete list of appointments & retirements, see ***www.gfilesindia.com***

VIBHA PURI DAS
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Uttarakhand cadre has been appointed Secretary, Higher Education.

K MOHAN DAS
The 1974-batch IAS officer of the Kerala cadre has become Secretary, Shipping.

SAVITA ANAND
The 1981-batch IFS officer of the Rajasthan cadre is now Joint Secretary, Department of Land Resources in the Government of India.

RAMESH CHANDRA MISHRA
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the Orissa cadre has been made Special Secretary & FA in the Department of Information & Technology.

ANOOP KUMAR SRIVASTAVA
The 1981-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre has been appointed Joint Secretary, Department of Revenue.

BHUPINDER PRASAD
The 1976-batch IAS officer of the UT cadre is now Special Secretary, Department of Justice.

MUKHMEET SINGH BHATIA
The 1990-batch IAS officer of the Jharkhand cadre has become OSD to Namo Narayan Meena, Minister of State for Finance.

TEJINDER KAUR
The 1973-batch IAS officer of the Punjab cadre is now Chairperson of the Punjab Infrastructure Regulatory Authority.

CS KEDAR
The 1979-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre has assumed charge as Director General of the Employees State Insurance Corporation.

ANIL RAZDAN
The 1973-batch IAS officer of the Haryana cadre has been appointed part-time non-official Director of Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) for three years.

JP SINGH
The 2000-batch IPS officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre is now Regional Passport Officer (RPO), Lucknow.

LOKHANDE PRASHANT SITARAM
The 2001-batch IAS officer of the AGMUT cadre has become Deputy Commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

ALOK KUMAR
The 1984-batch IAS officer of the Assam-Meghalaya cadre is now Joint Secretary, Department of Personnel & Training.

SKG RAHATE
The 1990-batch IAS officer of the Jharkhand cadre has been appointed Director, Agriculture.

SANJOG KAPOOR
The 1999-batch IRS officer has been made Deputy Secretary in the Commerce Ministry.

SM MISHRA
The 1981-batch IRS officer has been appointed CVO in Hindustan Petroleum Corp Ltd, Mumbai.

SANJIV SHANKAR
The 1993-batch IRS officer has been posted as Director, Department of Personnel & Training.

DEEP NARAYAN PANDEY
The 1988-batch IFS officer of the Rajasthan cadre has been appointed Member Secretary of the Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board.

KRISHAN KUMAR
The 1984-batch IFS officer has become Joint Secretary in the Foreign Service Institute.

SUDHAKAR RAO
The 1973-batch IAS officer of the Karnataka cadre is now Member of the Public Selection Enterprises Bureau (PESB).

PREETI NATH
The 1995-batch IES officer has joined as Director, Disinvestment in the Government of India.

SANTANU
The 1997-batch IAS officer of the Manipur-Tripura cadre has been made Deputy Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

NK SAXENA
The 1982-batch IFS officer has been posted as OSD (Welfare) in the Ministry of External Affairs.

BISHNUPADA SETHI
The 1995-batch IAS officer of the Orissa cadre has joined the Government of India as Director, Census Orissa.

S SURESH
The 1988-batch IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre is now Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home and Adviser in National Disaster Management.

SUMANTRA CHOUDHARY
The 1985-batch IAS officer of the West Bengal cadre has been appointed Joint Secretary, Commerce in the Government of India.

S DURAI RAJU
The 1985-batch ISS officer is now Director in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Moving On: ias and ips officers retiring in December 2009

ANDHRA PRADESH
AK Goyal (1973)
BIHAR
Amrendra N Singh (1992)
GUJARAT
Gurcharan Singh (1974)
HARYANA
SP Gupta (1990)
JHARKHAND
VP Narayan Singh (1994)
J&K
Shiban Lal Bhat (1976)
KARNATAKA
Vinay Kumar (1975)
MAHARASHTRA
NN Kawade (1995)
MANIPUR-TRIPURA
Saichhuana (1975)
PUNJAB
GS Cheema (1972)
RAJASTHAN
Ashok K Pande (1973)
UTTAR PRADESH
Banmali Tandan (1972)

ips

AGMUT
NS Rana (1975)
ANDHRA PRADESH
KL Mohan (1971)
BIHAR
Y Malhotra (1975)
J&K
MK Mohanty (1971)
KERALA
R Chandrabhanu (1976)
MADHYA PRADESH
RB Sharma (1992)
MAHARASHTRA
JY Umranikar (1973)

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Tread cautiously, for the moment

Despite global economic recovery not giving a clear signal, the trend in Indian equities has remained positive due to abundant liquidity in the system. The weakness in the dollar is considered a major factor behind the relentless rise in equity valuations though an increasing number of analysts has started contesting the opinion that the markets have been ignoring fundamentals. More importantly, equities may see this trend lasting while the dollar continues its downward journey. The latest industrial data has lent credence to the upsurge in equities besides the growth in sale of cars and the sharp upswing in the Baltic Dry Index that tracks shipping movements.

The analysts have started feeling that the valuations now are a bit stretched and the markets need to consolidate the gains made in recent months. They are therefore advising investors to tread cautiously for the short to medium term. According to them, the market capitalization to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio – an indication of how risky the markets are – has indeed started pointing to this. At current market capitalization, the ratio is almost 100 per cent – the high it crossed only during the peak of the boom in 2007-08. This indicates that the returns in future from the present levels may be limited. Also, conditions in days to come will be far less favourable than what the markets have experienced in the recent past.

During the past nine months, liquidity has been good, interest rates low, stimulus packages were unleashed by most governments across the world, including in India, and inflation remained at the sub-zero level. The situation is likely to reverse in days to come with governments on their way to withdrawing the stimulus packages, inflation rising rapidly and easy money policy being slowed by the central banks. The markets have already discounted the good corporate numbers for the September quarter.

Though the RBI survey is upbeat on corporate profits for the financial year 2009-10, a detailed analysis of the September quarter results reveals a different story. The growth in net profit of manufacturing companies forming part of the BSE 500 Index in the September quarter stood at 54.45 per cent. But this has been mainly driven by lower raw material cost and lower interest outgo. Had there been no change in raw material prices and interest costs compared to the previous year, this would have been just 8.3 per cent. Sales have to pick up fast if the corporate sector has to maintain growth in profits. With commodity prices, including of crude, rising and the RBI indicating reversal of its easy money stance by withdrawing some of the special liquidity measures and imposing tighter norms for realty sector lending, things may not remain so rosy.

Though FIIs and domestic financial institutions have infused big money into the markets, the valuations may compel a slowing down of further flows

In a nutshell, while the markets have run up considerably, conditions are less favourable for a sustained boom. Though FIIs and domestic financial institutions, especially insurance companies, have infused big money into the markets, the valuations may compel a slowing down of further flows. In fact, the fund flows have already started slowing. In the first quarter of this year, there was an outflow of $1.5 billion. The second quarter saw inflows of $6.4 billion and third quarter of $7.4 billion. It has slowed to $2.4 billion in the current quarter. The dollar pull-back may be a major worry for the markets since an increasing number of investors has started viewing the US dollar as the most undervalued currency.

Small investors are advised to be cautious and may, in fact, book some profits so long as the good run continues.

Amar Remedies

(CMP Rs 39)

THE company manufactures vegetarian ayurvedic oral and healthcare products in India under the AMAR brand name. Its products include toothpaste, toothpowder, shampoo, creams, lotions, shaving gel, and balms and pain-relieving ointment. AMAR has manufacturing facilities in Surat, Daman and Dehradun with FDA approval for 25 ayurvedic and herbal products. It has an ISO 9001:2000 certificate of compliance from International Certification Services (Asia) for its quality management system and has won the International Star Award for quality in Paris. Various products of AMAR are exported to 10 countries from Europe through West Asia and Asia to the Far East.

At current market price the stock discounts the EPS of Rs 10.35 by a PE of only 3.84 which is abysmally low for a pure FMCG play. The stock appears to be very safe with the company having zero debt and a solid book value of about Rs 59. With consumers' increasing preference for herbal products and the promoters making a preferential allotment, the stock is in for a re-rating. g

The author has no exposure in the stock recommended in this column. gfiles does not accept responsibility for investment decisions by readers of this column. Investment-related queries may be sent to gfilesindia@gmail.com with Dr Sood's name in the subject line.

Good riddance... in Haryana

OFFICE farewells for retiring colleagues are usually occasions when pleasant anecdotes and the equivalent of sweet nothings are bandied about. But, when ML Tayal, an IAS officer of the 1976 batch and former Principal Secretary to Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, retired last month,

the gathering on the fourth floor of the Haryana Secretariat Building witnessed something unusual.

Tayal studied with Hooda and so is close to the Chief Minister. Naturally, the bureaucrats present began to spout praises. Then, a senior officer stood up and said something to the effect of, "Let's stop sycophancy and put the record straight. Everybody knows Mr Tayal was not a sweet-tongued officer. He behaved like a Hitler. So we should analyse how an outgoing officer behaved and serve the state."

This emboldened another officer who said, "Mr Tayal shames the IAS. He did not know even how to behave with colleagues. What is this to-do about his farewell?"

Seeing the atmosphere becoming charged, Chief Secretary Urvashi Gulati intervened, "Ladies and gentlemen, it's now tea time."

MP's iron man

EVERY successful Chief Minister has a coterie of bureaucrats that shores up the edifice of the state. Madhya Pradesh is no exception – it is run by a top bureaucrat, Mohammed Suleman. He is Secretary, PWD and Managing Director, Madhya Pradesh Setu Nigam. He controls the Secretariat and all files move through him.

As expansion of roads is a priority for Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan, Suleman is all the more vital; for the IAS officer of the 1985 batch is also a

qualified engineer. So, whenever files do not move, those affected make a beeline not for the Chief Minister but for Suleman.

No 'open house' for Diwali

JAMMU is not only the winter capital of Jammu & Kashmir, the city is also the home of the who's who of the state. Being SSP of Jammu is not only a prestigious assignment but also a challenging job in a terrorism-wracked region.

Everybody wants to cultivate the SSP, not just in the district but in the entire state. Basant Rath, the young police officer who is currently in the post, has developed a reputation for his frankness and honesty throughout the state.

This Diwali, everybody wanted to cosy up to one of the state's most important policemen. But Rath was on his guard. He not only kept his mobile switched off but locked his house from the outside and instructed the police post not to allow any visitors.

Some people were left a bit bewildered at how this hard nut could be cracked.

Unassuming Ansari

WHEN a bureaucrat turns politician, he realizes after attaining a certain stature that he can no longer mingle with his former colleagues and acquaintances as before. And, in terrorism-shadowed times, the changeover from bureaucrat to politician is felt all the more acutely. Security personnel and officialdom erect a rather visible cage.

However, Vice-President Hamid Ansari is proving an exception. A former IFS officer, he is far removed from today's politicians who are afraid of meeting and mingling with all. He might live in the Vice-President's residence but visits his old haunt, the

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